



## United States Embassy Belize

*Press Release*

November 15, 2004

### **BZ\$ 2,650,000 Worth of Counterfeit Marlboro Cigarettes Seized**

**Belize City, Belize** – The U.S. Embassy would like to inform the general public of a seizure of BZ\$2,650,000 worth of counterfeit cigarettes bearing the trademark of Marlboro by the Belize Customs at its main compound on October 28, 2004.

Following a joint, month-long investigation by the Belize Customs and investigators of Philip Morris International, the owner of the Marlboro trademark, the Belize Customs inspected two containers on October 28, 2004, and discovered that they contained merchandise other than what had been declared. Instead of containing slippers, as indicated on the Customs entry forms, both containers, destined for the Corozal Commercial Free Zone, were full of boxes containing cigarettes bearing the Marlboro trademark.

A representative of Philip Morris International was in Belize to verify the inauthenticity of the Marlboro cigarettes. According to Alex Torres, Senior Technical Analyst for Philip Morris International, the market value of the 1,644 master cases of the counterfeit cigarettes is approximately BZ \$2,650,000.

The U.S. Embassy joins Philip Morris International in thanking Comptroller of Customs Gregory Gibson and the personnel of the Revenue Intelligence Unit of the Customs Department for their support in this investigation and for their effort to enforce the trademark legislation of Belize.

The U.S. Embassy hopes that the information on this case that has been shared with local law enforcement authorities will lead to the swift conviction of the owners of the counterfeit Marlboro cigarettes.

For additional information on this seizure, please contact the Political/Economic Officer Edgar L. Embrey at tel: 227-7161, ext. 359.

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